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FROM AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER TO THE SECRETARY
NEA FOR RSCHMIERER, TBETTS

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SUBJECT: PRTS PROMOTE DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ

REF: SECSTATE-CROCKER TELCON FEBRUARY 8, 2009

¶1. (SBU) As we discussed in our telephone call on Sunday, February 8, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq have been essential to the emerging democracy in this country. The January 31 provincial elections succeeded in no small measure because of the civil society organizations and women's groups the PRTs have mentored, and the voter education programs they have sponsored. The election results - favoring new faces and secular parties - showed that Iraqi citizens want transparent, accountable local government and that they are increasingly willing to look beyond sectarian identification. The PRTs will capitalize on these results, working with new provincial leaders to offer training in accountable governance and to reinforce anti-corruption messages.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (U) The State Department established the Iraq PRT program in June 2005 to strengthen the capabilities of provincial governments, assist in coordinating USG reconstruction and development assistance efforts, provide enhanced reporting on political developments, and advocate U.S. policy goals. The PRT program's five-pronged focus on governance, political development, reconciliation, rule of law and economic development advances grassroots democracy and government accountability in all eighteen of Iraq's provinces.

¶3. (U) Although Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) organized the January 31, 2009 elections, the PRTs plowed much of the ground. They sponsored voter registration and education and civil society development programs. The PRTs also served as the platform from which 400 international observers confirmed the credibility and legitimacy of the elections.

KEY PRT ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY

¶4. (U) The PRT program in Iraq has promoted democracy and transparent government since its inception. PRTs have fostered the development of NGOs and civil society organizations, worked with women's groups, supported voter education, and brokered contacts between national and local level officials and between officials and constituents.

FOSTERING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

¶5. (U) PRT Baghdad helped fund and train staff of the Baghdad Provincial Council's newspaper, the Baghdaduna, which has highlighted the role of local government in Iraq. The PRT is implementing two large Public Diplomacy grants that will train 135 Iraqi journalists in reporting on local government.

¶6. (U)PRT Baghdad funded NGOs that disseminated IHEC-approved voter materials including: 6,054 radio ads on 16 stations; 317 television ads on 9 stations; 634 newspaper ads in 32 papers; 258,000 flyers; 60,000 posters; 264 billboards; and 120,000 ballots.

¶7. (U)PRT Maysan funded the Maysan NGO Capacity Building Project, whose goal is to promote effectiveness of civil society organizations to ensure that citizens' interests are included in the provincial government's policy and resource allocations. The PRT funded training and outreach to increase the institutional capacity and viability of 10 local NGOs.

WORKING WITH WOMEN

¶8. (U) PRT Muthana assisted the Al Rafidain Women's Organization and their NGO network to hold 147 voter education events attended by 6,889 people, including 3,168 women.

¶9. (U) In the heart of the former Sunni insurgency, ePRT Fallujah Q9. (U) In the heart of the former Sunni insurgency, ePRT Fallujah recently funded a 3-month long leadership development class for 50 young Fallujah women. These women will receive lectures and participate in discussions on leadership, public speaking and women's rights.

EDUCATING VOTERS

¶10. (U) PRT Muthana helped facilitate an NGO's production of 15 "skits" promoting different voter education topics. Professional Iraqi actors performed the skits which were broadcast 60 times during the two weeks prior to the January 31 elections.

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¶11. One of the Baghdad ePRTs funded trainers who held at least 60 voter outreach sessions for over 4,500 potential voters. Of particular note, one session in the Al Rasheed district (previously known as the Triangle of Death) drew over 550 women on 36 hours notice. Another targeted specifically at women drew an overflow crowd of more than 200.

INITIATING POLITICAL INTERACTION

12 (U) PRTs also help break down old, unproductive patterns of interaction. The teams in Salah ah Din, Maysan and elsewhere have facilitated and organized visits by the Provincial Governor and other central government officials to remote districts and sub districts. Frequently, this was the first face-to-face interaction between the officials and their electorate.

CROCKER